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THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

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THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Studies in Christian Experience

BY

FITZGERALD SALE PARKER

EDITOR OF THE "EPWORTH ERA"



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FOREWORD

The purpose of these studies is to give a clear and accurate statement of the New Testament teaching concerning the spiritual life. They are non-technical; theological terms have not been used and the matter has been kept consistently within the field of the Biblical material.

They were prepared with a constituency of young people in view and with the hope that they might serve both for private devotional reading and for group study in young people's societies.

The questions following each chapter may prove helpful in conducting study groups, especially when leaders are inexperienced. But the thorough use of the Biblical material, which is given both in a prefatory way and throughout the text

Foreword

will be necessary if we are duly to profit by the reading and study either individually or in groups.

These studies are divided into two sections: the first setting forth the new life in Christ as a fact of experience, the second making an appeal to those who are not vitally Christians that they enter the way of life and be saved from sin. This order may not be logical, but it is practical. It is the enrichment of one's own spiritual life that best empowers him effectively to bear testimony to Jesus Christ as Saviour, thus making his own faith count for most. Therefore the studies begin with the fact of the Christian life and proceed thence to the appeal.

These studies are not sermons. A sermon belongs to the ministry of the pulpit; it has the form of a message of the minister who has been called and set apart to the ministry of the Word. They are studies designed for the guidance of young Christians. The author's confidence in their value arises from his con-

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viction that they interpret the New Testament teaching, and he believes that every statement in them is amply supported by references that are truly relevant when soundly interpreted.

FITZGERALD S. PARKER.

NASHVILLE, TENN.,
February 1, 1926.

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I

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

I

A LIFE OF SONSHIP

BIBLE PASSAGES

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and the unjust.—Matt. v. 44, 45.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.—John i. 12, 13.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him: How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

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That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.—John iii. 3-6.

For ye are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.—Gal. iii. 16.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.—Rom. viii. 14-16.

PRAYER

Almighty God, who hast given us thy only begotten Son to take our nature upon him and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; grant that we, being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same, our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

—*Collect for Christmas Day.*

STUDY

The Christian life is contrasted with a worldly, sinful life as filial. God is recognized as father and the dominant motive is childlike obedience and trust. Between a life that is ruled by the motive of sonship and that ruled by the motive of pleasing self, men, or the world, there is a

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great gulf, but happily it is not one that is impassable like that in the other world that separated Dives and Lazarus. They who will may pass over into the life of sonship through faith in Jesus Christ and, alas! they who will may fall away from its privileges as the result of unfaithfulness to its duties.

I

The Christian trusts God as Father. To many persons God is a doctrine or a theory or even an object of fear, perhaps of worship, while he is not loved and trusted as a Father. In teaching men to call God "Father" Jesus took the holiest relationship in life to teach us the most vital truth about God. Not only does it carry the thought of our origin in him, of his responsibility for the children he has begotten, but of a community of interest, as in the family group, where the concerns of one member are the concerns of all. No one can fully understand the love of a father except a father. It is

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this aspect of God, as a loving Father, that the child of God rests in even when he suffers and experiences disappointment and grief. The essence of sin is that it is unfilial; it fails to trust God and to live in his love. An unconverted person trusts in self and follows the dictates of worldly custom, often consciously rejecting the way of obedience to God because he cannot trust God.

But some one may ask, Are not all men children of God? They are in a sense different from that we here use, although the term is not so employed in the New Testament. God is the Creator of all men, therefore he occupies toward them the attitude of Father. He has redeemed them and loved them from the beginning. His providence is over them. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt. v. 45). But whatever God's attitude toward all men, the New Testament teaching is that it is by a new birth that men become children

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of God in the sense that we now attach to the term. However paternal God may be, it is required that men become correspondingly filial (John i: 11, 12).

II

The Christian obeys God as Father. Without love and veneration of parents there can be no real obedience in the family group. So there can be no heart obedience by those who do not recognize God as Father and from the motives of love and trust render him cheerful obedience. A painful obedience there may be motived by fear or rendered with a hope of heavenly gain, but that is what St. Paul discredits as "the righteousness of the law" in distinction from the righteousness of faith" (Rom. x. 3-6). Thus love is the fulfilling of the law (Gal. v. 14). It is a pity that many well-meaning people should work so painfully at the religion of law—that is, obedience to outward precepts, which cannot profit them much, instead of living in the freedom of an

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obedience rendered joyfully and freely because of awareness and even consciousness of a Father's love. The boy who obeys his father only for fear of the rod of discipline is not really obeying at all. The essence of obedience, the only obedience that pleases God, is such as obtains in the family group where the father is truly loved and held in veneration, so that the greatest pain would be not to obey. Thus the life of sonship is a life of freedom.

III

The life of sonship is one of a growing knowledge of God. Professor Huxley invented the term *agnostic*, which signifies one who does not know, to designate persons who confess that they do not know God and who deny that God can be known. He said, "It is impossible for me to know these things"—that is, that there is a personal God and that the soul is immortal. Professor Huxley spoke from the standpoint of a rationalist, one who had failed through intellectual proc-

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esses to find God. The humblest child of God through faith in Jesus Christ has an experience as the result of which he is able to affirm with confidence that God is his Father. Providence, the constant care by which life is sustained and blessed, grace, the daily help in living unto God and loving one's neighbor, and mercy, by which one daily experiences the forgiveness of sin and cleansing from the defilements that may be contracted in the world, are sources of increasing knowledge of God. The answer of experience makes the Bible an unfolding volume of knowledge of God, whom the great scientist declared unknowable. It is the sympathetic attitude of a child that makes possible this growing knowledge. As children grow older and more mature they understand things about their parents that they could not in earlier years. They enter into fuller sympathy with them and a wonderful friendship rises up over the filial relation that they had known. "This is life eternal, to know

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thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ,
whom thou hast sent." (John xvii. 3.)

IV

Unity of mind is an aspect of the filial attitude. The New Testament speaks of this as "reconciliation" or "atonement." (2 Cor. v. 18-21.) From the standpoint of conscience it is the forgiveness of sins, but more essentially it is the coming to God's point of view about ourselves and our life. The parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates God's yearning love as Father for the child who has done enough to forfeit his sonship, but whom his father will not give up. (Luke xv. 11-24.) The parable illustrates also the reconciliation that takes place when the repentant child returns to his father with confessions on his lips and contrition in his heart. Probably in the forgiving embrace of his father the wayward child, for the first time, was really at one with the father and felt the sweetness and

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serenity and security of the home. His repentance was of unfilial conduct. His return was to the father's house and the father's love. That is what it is with any unfilial child of God. Let him accept the Father's love and care, and his own broken life will be healed in his Heavenly Father's embrace.

V

The life of Jesus sets before us in its perfection the life of filial trust and obedience. He must be guide to them who are children of God by faith in him. (1) Jesus's obedience was pleasing to the Father (John vi. 38; viii. 29; xvii. 1-7). (2) His work was working together with his Father (John v. 17; ix. 4). (3) His life was sacrificial in always putting the will of his Father in the first place (John v. 30; Matt. xvi. 21-26). (4) His trust was continuous and sufficient for the utmost demand (Matt. xi. 27; xxvi. 39). (5) His life was a showing forth of the

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character of the Father (John x. 25, 37, 38; xiv. 6-11; Heb. i. 3).

In the sermon preached by Dr. Fosdick at his installation in the pastorate of Park Avenue Baptist Church, New York, he told the story of a group of West Point delegates at Northfield, in which one suddenly threw in the question, "What is Christianity, anyway?" After a period of silence, one student answered: "Oscar Westover." There was a young man who stood before those who knew him best as such an embodiment of Christianity that they could define it in terms of this young man's life. God can be defined in the terms of Jesus's life. He is the revelation of the Father (John xiv. 7-9). Our lives then, in their measure, must be such as to direct others to a true conception of our Father in heaven. Bitter controversy about orthodox teaching will not do it. I doubt whether our Father cares anything about many of the things that embitter Christians against each other, except as they must be occa-

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sion of grief to him; but he does care that we follow in Jesus's footsteps and thus manifest him to the world.

VI

Of course the prayer life belongs to the life of sonship. Prayer is more communion than petition; but still petition is an important part of prayer. But it is petition not as demand, nor yet as entreaty, but as a means of coming to a full understanding of the mind and will of our Father. It is not so much that we may constrain him to our desires and our viewpoint as that we may understand what he deems best and what is his point of view that causes us to pray. The prayer life of the child of God is joyous, therefore praise comes spontaneously. It recognizes the Father as the source of all blessings both spiritual and material, therefore thanksgiving abounds. It is in united prayer in the Church or social gathering that the family of God meet with the Father. It is in secret prayer

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that the child pours out his confidences into the sympathetic ear of the Father and receives answering consolations and guidance.

QUESTIONS

1. Broadly speaking, what is the great, distinguishing characteristic of the Christian's attitude toward God?
2. What fitness, or appropriateness, do you find in Jesus's use of the term Father to define God's relation to his followers? Does he mean by Fatherhood figuratively to speak of God, or does he define a real relationship?
3. In what sense do we employ the term "Fatherhood of God" when (1) we make it include all mankind; what when (2) we make it apply only to Christian believers?
4. How do persons become children of God in the sense in which the New Testament employs the term?
5. In what way do you find the religion of love and the religion of law contrasted in the conception of Fatherhood?
6. In what sense was Prof. Huxley right in his agnostic position? Wherein was he radically wrong?
7. In what way does the Bible become to us an unfolding revelation of God?
8. Indicate five ways in which the life of Jesus perfectly exemplifies the filial spirit.
9. In what way is the life of Jesus the final definition of the Christian faith?
10. What light does the relationship of father and child throw upon the subject of prayer?
11. Is it possible for us to think of the Christian life

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and faith in terms more accurate, more practical or more in accord with the New Testament teaching than as the life of sonship?

12. If we could fully realize that God is our Father, what practical effects would immediately begin to appear in our lives? Would those round about us know that something had occurred to change the currents of our life?

II

THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS AND FELLOWSHIP

BIBLE PASSAGES

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin—1 John i. 1-7.

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice, and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. . . . Then said Jesus unto them again, I am the door of the sheep—John x. 4-7.

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For this cause I suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.—2 Tim. i. 12.

PRAYER

O God, who hast prepared for them that love thee such good things as pass man's understanding; Pour into our hearts such love towards thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which excel all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—*Collect for Sixth Sunday after Trinity.*

STUDY

Jesus once lived upon earth. There can be no question of the historical fact. Our belief does not rest wholly nor indeed primarily upon the Gospel records. Movements were started by him that have come down to our own times. Institutions, such as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, were established by him that have had a continuous existence throughout the Christian centuries. And the Gospels testify of him—inexplicable documents if he had never lived. But if we had no Gospels, if Matthew, Mark,

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Luke and John had never written of him, we should still have ground for believing in Jesus; we should have the tradition of him that circulated in the early Church before the first Gospel was written.

But what was the significance of the life? And what was he, if anything, more than the Galilean teacher, reformer, martyr, and indirect originator of a new religion? These are important questions to which earnest men have given widely differing answers, although at least one of these answers expresses the supreme hope of mankind.

John the apostle brings a first-hand testimony to the facts of the life with an interpretation of Jesus that was obtained through his own experience. Though he wrote when an aged man, the historical facts were still vivid in his memory, and his interpretation of the facts had been tested through long years of thought and action that had centered in the historical Jesus, the Jesus whom he had known. The facts that he recorded he wrote

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down for the purpose of impressing his interpretations upon future generations (John xx. 30, 31). "The life was manifested, and we have seen it and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John i. 1, 2.)

To John Jesus became manifest as the divine Son of God; and not to John only, but also to the others who had followed him in the days of his flesh. During the sixty or seventy years that had elapsed between the time when he heard, saw, gazed upon, and handled the Word of Life, the Incarnate Son of God, he had enjoyed fellowship with Him who had been manifested, the eternal Life, and that fellowship had not been separable from a fellowship with the Eternal Father. But the important thing for us

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in John's testimony is that *we also may have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ* (1 John i. 3).

I

How did the manifestation of God in Christ become certain and experiential with John?

1. John observed it. The character of Jesus presses upon us the conviction that he is the Divine Son of God, the Saviour of the World. (1) We cannot find anywhere in his life occasion to question the testimony of the Holy Spirit at his baptism—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17)—and at the Transfiguration—"Hear ye him" (Matt. xvii. 5). (2) Jesus enjoyed a profound consciousness of God and unbroken communion with the Father (Matt. xi. 27). (3) Such was the perfection of the spiritual insight of Jesus that we cannot conceive of any other kind of a God than "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (John i. 18; 2

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Cor. iv. 6). (4) Jesus had perfect knowledge of the human heart (John ii. 24). (5) Jesus's life was perfectly adjusted to duty; there was no moral failure in him at any point (John viii. 46). (6) Jesus's love was perfect (John xiii. 1; Luke xxiii. 34). (7) Jesus had absolute assurance that he had a mission to the whole world (John iii. 16, 17; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). To John as he looked upon the divine-human Jesus there came with irresistible force the conviction that he was the Word of Life, the Divine Son of the Father. After the resurrection and the ascension, when the heavens had received him out of sight, the fellowship continued unbroken in a spiritual presence that Jesus had promised as a Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. This evidence was one with that of the unique life.

2. The Gospel according to John shows, first, a manifestation to the world on the part of Jesus that the world rejected, followed by a more complete unfolding of his nature to his disciples. It

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was a dawning of the true Light. It is thus that the light is today withdrawn from him who will not walk in it; and it is thus that it grows brighter for those who will. The very structure of John's Gospel has its parallels in the life of today.

3. From this discovery of Jesus fellowship and communion resulted. It was something to Jesus as well as to his disciples. He chose twelve "that they should be with him" (Mark iii. 13, 14). Even during the earthly life of Jesus he could call them friends (John xv. 13-16).

II

How may we also enter into this fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ?

1. In a way similar to that of John and the others who beheld him in the days of his Incarnate life. The Gospel record stands for us in the place of the Life that John beheld. From the sacred page the words and deeds and attitudes stand out,

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interpreted, it is true, through the personality of John and the other evangelists; but the interpretation also is a part of the gospel. The effect of the gospels upon us is that of the Life. It comes to us through human personality, but vitalized through testimony. They declare and show unto us the eternal Life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto them. The testimony of those who saw and heard takes the place of the visible, tangible Jesus. Through human personality, such as that of John, the Spirit of Jesus acts upon other persons. Thus it has come to us.

2. But not only through the personality of the evangelists and apostles has Jesus affected us. Likewise through the personality of others who live to-day and whose testimony to what they have known of fellowship with him are we brought face to face with Jesus Christ. Such manifestation is essentially the mission of the Church. Think but a moment of the avenues through which our faith

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in Christ has come. There was the teaching of parents, the preaching of the gospel in the Church, the personal testimony and concern of some Christian friend, the mighty volume of the testimony of the Church—all these have united in harmonious witness to Jesus.

3. Not without these witnesses, but greater than them all is Jesus himself. His promise was that he would send the Spirit of Truth to bear witness of him (John xvi. 7-14), and as Spirit Jesus is really present with every testimony of holy Word or witnessing friend, thus making effective their word (John xv. 26, 27).

III

There is another fellowship—"one with another," that the Christian enjoys—the fellowship with his brother disciples.

1. The Church is a part of the Christian life. Love of God and the brethren are unbreakably coupled. It is through the Church that the testimony comes; it

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is in the Church that the fellowship with the Father and the Son is maintained. John rests the whole case for the Christian life upon brotherly love (1 John iii. 14-17). The Church is primarily a brotherhood that finds its motive, not in a belief of universal Fatherhood, but in the communion of the love of Christ.

2. The life of prayer is maintained through the Church. There is an especial promise where two are agreed upon earth as touching anything that they shall ask (Matt. xviii. 19, 20). The life of hidden communion and that of open worship are the two hemispheres of the Christian life; both are essential.

3. A breach of fellowship with our brother will cause a break in our fellowship with the Father and the Son. Hence the emphasis that Jesus places upon the forgiving spirit (Matt. vi. 14, 15). Love of the brethren is a cardinal teaching of the New Testament (1 Thess. iv. 9; John xiii. 34, 35). A disunited Church with members at odds with each other lacks

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the fellowship with Jesus and the Father. A person professing to follow Jesus who harbors grudges, unforgiveness, resentment, and enmities is barred from communion with God. Bitter words and unkind acts and evil reports concerning others prevent communion with God. Strife and controversy about our dogmas is not helpful to fellowship with God because it breaks the fellowship with our brethren. Fellowship in obedience to the life of Jesus is the way to Christian unity, not fellowship in opinion. Jesus never placed the emphasis upon opinion, far less upon *our* opinions concerning fundamentalism and modernism. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

QUESTIONS

1. How has the significance of the life of Jesus been variously interpreted? How interpreted by John?
2. What interest has John's interpretation for those who never knew Jesus in the days of his flesh?

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3. What are the seven elements in the character of Jesus as observed by John by which the conviction is pressed upon us that he is Divine?
4. What is the law of the manifestation and the withdrawal of the light of the life of Jesus? How illustrated by the structure of John's Gospel?
5. What new relationship developed between Jesus and his followers as they walked "in the light"?
6. What is the ordinary channel through which Jesus is manifested to men who are living today?
7. What place has the Church in the manifestation of Jesus?
8. Is there also a direct manifestation of Jesus to the spirits of men today?
9. Beside the fellowship with the Father and the Son, what other great fellowship is essential in the Christian life.
10. Is it possible to maintain fellowship with the Father and the Son while, at the same time, it has been broken with our brethren?

III

COUNSELS FOR THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

BIBLE PASSAGES

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.—Colossians iii. 1-5.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.—Galatians v. 19-25.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not

Counsels for the New Life in Christ

robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.—*Philippians ii. 5-8.*

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

—*Collect for Ascension Day.*

STUDY

In the people whom Paul addressed in his letter to the Colossians something had happened that made them different from the cultured pagans about them. Indeed, such a fact underlay all his letters. To the Ephesians he writes: “Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.” (Eph. v. 8.) The most astonishing example is in the first Corinthian Epistle. He writes: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit

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the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 9-11.) In our first passage Paul describes this thing that had occurred as a being "raised with Christ" (Col. iii. 1). That is, there is something in the experience of the Christian that corresponds with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. (See Rom. vi. 3-5.) It would not be fanciful to find a similar correspondence between the Christian's experience and many points in the life of Jesus. Paul declared that he had been crucified with Christ. He said our baptism was a burial with Christ. The new birth is a supernatural fact that has an analogy to his Virgin birth. His

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temptations were in the line of the temptations that come to his disciples, and his hours of triumph or defeat offer us a fellowship in life.

I

This experience of being “raised with Christ” is a likening to the supreme miracle. Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. i. 4). It must therefore be something radical, profound, utterly unlike what we see in growth or development. And indeed it is spoken of by our Lord and the apostles in other terms of the most sweeping significance. To begin with, Jesus calls it being “born again.” It is effected by a gracious act of God, which is compared with the beginning of the creation. “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts.” (2 Cor. iv. 6.) Jesus said: “No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him.” (John

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vi. 44; i. 12, 13.) James uses Jesus's figure with a variation: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." (James i. 18.) Peter speaks of Christians as being "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever," and of those in the beginning of the Christian way as "newborn babes" (1 Peter i. 23; ii. 2). John designates Christians as those who have been born of God (1 John iii. 9; v. 1, 18; iv. 7). But to Paul we must go for a number of striking figures beside that of resurrection with Christ. He speaks of death unto sin through the crucifixion of the old man (Rom. vi. 6; Gal. ii. 29); of a new creation (Col. iii. 10; Eph. iv. 24; 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15); a passing from darkness into light (Col. i. 13; 1 Peter ii. 9); a translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. i. 3); and uses other equally significant terms. We need not study all these figures of speech in detail, nor need we push the points of

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analogy or correspondence between them and the fact of the new life in Christ. It is sufficient to note that they all indicate a transforming effect wrought upon the nature of a person by which he is made a "new creature." The New Testament contains no other teaching of the genesis and character of the Christian life. When one has become a Christian something has come to pass that makes a tremendous difference. "Old things have passed away, and, behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.)

As vastly significant as is the entrance upon the Christian life by a new birth, a resurrection, a re-creation, or whatever may be understood by means of these mighty figures, the attending circumstances receive very little attention. The fact of conversion is of supreme importance. The collateral emotions or feelings, the ability definitely to recognize the time and place of its occurrence, whether gradual or sudden, whether immediately made certain to consciousness

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or recognized like the dawning of the day, do not greatly concern us, nor can we press the New Testament figures of speech to a meaning that includes these incidents. The new life may be generated in the heart of a child, as he learns obedience to Christ with the unfolding of his powers, without great emotional accompaniment. It may be wrought in the heart of a man grown mature in sin by a cataclysmic process which he will instantly recognize and to which he will ever afterwards be able to point as the "happy day." In young people this change is usually definite, a conscious acceptance of Christ as Saviour, accompanied by an assurance of the forgiveness of sin and acceptance with God. In men of maturity it is oftener a reasoned and deliberate turning to Christ, followed by the fruits of the new life as the chief evidence. But without the fact of renewing in Christ, no one has entered, therefore no one can live, the Christian life.

Hence Paul begins his exhortation to

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set your mind upon things that are above by saying: "If ye were raised with Christ." Our personal question is, Have we been raised with Christ? There are many members of the Church, and as such supposed to be Christian believers, who make no headway in the Christian life. Their trouble is that they have never been raised with Christ. They have experienced no real change of heart by the power of the Spirit of God. They are not yet spiritually alive; therefore it is futile to place before them the conditions of the Christian life.

II

What happens when one is raised with Christ?

1. The first thing that distinguishes this new life is that Christ has become real and is known in communion. Our preceding study brought out this aspect of fellowship; the one preceding that was about the sense of sonship. Diffidence gives place to confidence and estrange-

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ment to reconciliation. Remember that it is not a question whether gradually or suddenly recognized; the fact is always a part of Christian experience.

2. Christ is known as the new center of interest. The risen, living Christ becomes the object of a new loyalty. Fidelity to him and obedience to his will take precedence of every other loyalty. Young people are usually very loyal to their friends, their "set," their college, or whatever interest may be dominant; but when they have been converted Christ takes the first place. I do not mean that the other loyalties have been lost; they have merely been subordinated to Christ; and if it should chance that any one of them is not consistent with fidelity to Christ, that one will be set aside and repudiated, but only that.

3. Christ becomes a test or standard of judgment or valuation. Unconverted people have their main interest in things that have no existence beyond this world; therefore they are described as "worldly."

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The pleasures and riches of this world—its honors, its fellowships, its contests, its applause—are the objects of their thought and toil and the means of their enjoyment. They cannot imagine anyone's doing without these things and being happy at the same time. They dance in voluptuous embrace; they seek thrills; they accumulate money or squander it from an equally evil motive. A converted person tests all things by the mind of Jesus. He can determine the fitness of a recreation by asking whether he can expect the mystical presence of his Lord while following it. Legislation against obscene books and theatrical performances will never get us anywhere: we must apply the test of Jesus's presence and approval. The converted person has fixed his mind on things where Christ is. He can better do without these worldly things than with them, for the rule of these things in human life was rejected by Jesus.

4. The thing that has happened when one has been raised with Christ becomes

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evident in a new relation to one's fellow man. If we really know Christ, we shall be earnestly seeking to win our friends to him. But this new life becomes manifest to those whom we touch in their life. At the request of James Gordon Bennett, the proprietor of the New York *Herald*, Henry M. Stanley, an energetic but skeptical journalist, went into the heart of Africa to find David Livingstone, who had not been heard from for a long time and was supposed to be lost in the interior or detained as a captive. Stanley was successful in his quest; but he gained something more; he found Christ. He said of his conversion, that day after day, as he saw Livingstone, doing all that the gospel required, living a life of fellowship with Christ, his skepticism faded, and he found himself believing in the Christ of David Livingstone.

5. As in our preceding studies, in this also we come up against the significance of the life of prayer. With our minds set upon things above, where Christ is, we

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shall find prayer the secret of keeping our hearts true and our thoughts of God clear. We shall be much and regularly in prayer. It is in this way that the Christian really sets his mind upon things above. Without prayer his life will ravel, his faith will fail, Christ will become unreal, and he will fall before the temptation to worldliness. "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. iii. 20.)

QUESTIONS

1. What fact in the moral history of the people to whom Paul writes is an assumption in all his epistles?
2. To what epochal gospel fact does Paul liken this experience? Are there other experiences in the Divine-human life of Christ that have an analogy to Christian experience?
3. Cite some of the figures used in the New Testament to describe the Christian's experience of entrance into the new life. What are we compelled by the figures to infer as to the nature of this experience?
4. Are the attendant circumstances of this experience of importance? Are they at all significant? Can they be standardized?
5. What is the thing first in importance that distinguishes the new life?

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6. In what way does Christ become a new center to a converted person?
7. In what way does Christ become a standard of judgment of values, a test in every department of life?
8. In what ways does the new life become manifest to our fellow men, and with what effects?
9. What are the immediate logical and practical requirements of those who have been raised with Christ?

IV

THE PURIFYING LIFE

BIBLE PASSAGES

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.—
1 John iii. 1-3.

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.—
Hebrews x. 12-17.

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath

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called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.—1 Peter i. 13-16.

PRAYER

May God the Father and the eternal High Priest Jesus Christ build us up in faith and truth and love, and grant us our portion among the saints with all those who believe on our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for all saints, for kings and rulers, for the enemies of the cross of Christ; and for ourselves we pray that our fruit may abound and we may be made perfect in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

—*Polycarp of Smyrna* (A.D. 58.)

STUDY

I

In our third study we quoted Paul's hypothesis: "If ye were raised with Christ." We referred to a parallel figure of John's: "Born again; born of the Spirit; born of God." In our first Scripture reference for to-day the same thing is referred to as a fact accomplished—"Now are we the sons of God." With Paul the experience of sonship (see first study) is no less a fact than with John; in the Colossian passage he uses the "if"

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as a leverage to lift Christian confessors to a conception of their privilege and a sense of their duty as children of God, those who have been "raised with Christ." It certainly stands for a high privilege and signifies a wonderful state of "grace wherein we stand" (Rom. v. 2). Is this the Christian's highest privilege? Yes, but not yet realized in its highest degree or its maturity. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." The character of the Christian's expectation is that "we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." This is the "living hope" to which we are "begotten by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead" (1 Peter i. 3). This hope the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes as "an anchor to the soul, which entereth that within the veil, whither Jesus our forerunner is entered" (Heb. vi. 19).

These passages link the life of the Christian here upon the earth with the heavenly life in the world to come. But

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the real and unbreakable link that unites the twain is Jesus himself. His great prayer for his disciples included this: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." (See Study VI.) The world to come, the heavenly state, the hope that has come to men through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is an essential part of the Christian's faith. So important is it that Paul says: "We are saved by hope." (Rom. viii. 24.) Christ in us is the "hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. v. 1ff.) But we must always remember that it is his promise that he will come and receive us unto himself (John xiv. 3). He is not only the "way," but the "truth and the life"—that is, heaven itself consists in him.

The hope has an earthly side. If we "fix our mind upon things above, where Christ is," it is that we may kill the sen-

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sual dispositions of the old, unrenewed nature (Col. iii. 5). If we have our hope set upon him, it is that we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure (1 John iii. 3). It is useless to talk about the hope of a heavenly life unless we are earnestly seeking to live an earthly life of conformity with Christ. If Christ is not only the center, but the very reality of the life of the world to come, there can be no preparation for that life which is not an effort to be like him. The conception of purity that governs the Christian's life is the character of Jesus. He is ascended, but his character in glory is exactly what it was in the days of his humiliation. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." (Rom. viii. 9, 10.) Not only in kind but also in degree the Christian seeks to be like Jesus. Let us be as dogmatic here as we can; we are on the safe ground of the New Testament. The Christian life is one of endeavor to be-

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come like Christ. It is a life that is lifted to a hope of which Christ is the author, but that hope implies a life of constantly increasing conformity with the life of Jesus.

"We own thy sway, we hear thy call,
We test our lives by thine."

II

The passages we have been considering and many others in the New Testament teach the doctrine of entire sanctification (1 Thess. v. 32). We have from Wesley an inheritance of testimony and teaching upon this important subject. The early Methodists were urged to press on unto the attainment of a state of full conformity with Christ, the high privilege of the children of God, to "purify themselves even as he is pure." Their theology was not so very different from that of some of the Churches, but they dared to put the doctrine to the test of practice. This is the characteristic note of Methodist theology. It is tried out in experi-

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ence, and whatever has no value in the experience of the Christian is deemed of little account in the system of doctrine.

There is a sense in which the consummation of the Christian's desire to be like Christ awaits the day of his manifestation, "when we shall see him as he is"; but there is a sense in which one may be wholly sanctified here in this life. Wesley in teaching this doctrine kept safely within the New Testament; for he insisted upon defining sanctification in the Scripture terms of loving God with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourself (Matt. xxii. 37-39). Love is the essential element of holiness. Great emotion, sudden changes and epoch-making experiences may accompany stages of the Christian life; and especially in connection with the teaching of entire sanctification an undue importance has been given these, but in fact they have little, if any importance. The love that counts is obedient love, not sentimental love. "If ye love me, keep my

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commandments" (John xiv. 23, 24) was Jesus's test. Love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. xiii. 10; Gal. v. 14). Therefore to love God and our fellow man with increasing power is to grow in holiness. To act always from the motive of love is to be wholly sanctified.

III

Growth in holiness is the result of effort. We must always remember that there are both a divine and a human side to all our spiritual processes. An English theologian speaks of the toilsome pursuit of holiness. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 12.) It is the Spirit of Holiness, the Spirit of Christ who purifies the Christian; it is also the Christian who "purifieth himself." The life of prayer, self-discipline, effort after obedience, and study of the pattern Life is the Christian's part. It is the test of the reality of

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his hope in Christ. Again may it be said with added emphasis: If one will not seek to be like Christ in word, thought, and deed, let him abandon his talk of heavenly hope and rightly construe his anticipations of future blessedness as mere sickly sentiment.

IV

There are three ways in which one may purify himself as Jesus is pure.

1. We shall be made like him through the assimilative power of fellowship. People grow together by association. It is this aspect of the life that we emphasized in our second study. Not only does the conviction of his Divine nature become irresistible through this fellowship; the desire to be like him becomes dominant in the same way. This fellowship may take the form of work, of prayer, or of suffering. Particularly we can control it as prayer. At stated times we must go into the place of secret prayer and shut the door, and pray to the Father who

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seeth in secret (Matt. vi. 5, 6). It seems as if there were few things harder in the Christian life than regularly to keep the morning watch, to talk with our Saviour before we talk with men. It is Satan's device to persuade us that we can easily and with impunity postpone our prayers or that something else is more important. But there is nothing more important.

2. We shall be like him through devout study of the Word of God. It is in that Word that we find knowledge of him and are able to grow into him. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) The thought life is important, even as the prayer life is important. They both go together. When thought becomes vivid, as in vision, it is especially potent. Therein lies the evil of bad books and pictures. Lascivious images pollute the soul. What a pity many of us subject ourselves to these Satanic influences

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more frequently than we seek mental images that would help to make us holy. In the ultimate manifestation of Christ we shall be like him as the effect of the beatific vision: "We shall see him as he is." The same process in a measure goes on here and with the same effect: it makes us like him.

3. The third way of purifying oneself is through coöperation. "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Cor. vi. 1.) A recent magazine article pictured the disappointed hope of a minister whose communion service seemed but a lifeless form and his message a sound that fell upon deaf ears. Walking down the street after the evening service, despondent and seeking to quiet his wrought-up nerves, he stepped into a whisky den in order to see what it was that made life so intense to the men who were there carousing. A poor bloke appealed to him for money with which to buy whisky. Touched with Christlike

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compassion, he laid his hand on the man and said: "Brother you do not need whisky; you are a sick man; you need a doctor." He took the poor fellow to a doctor, then to a lodging house. He did for him what the good Samaritan did for the wounded Jew. As he turned toward his home, he realized that he had found Christ, that he had indeed realized the "Presence" as he had not at the communion. His heart was light; his step was buoyant; he was at peace. He had found Christ in lowly service for one of the least of Christ's brethren; he was becoming like Jesus in Christlike service.

QUESTIONS

1. How do our Bible passages link the life of the child of God on earth with his future life?
2. What is the essential, experimental fact that links children of God with a purified life in the world to come?
3. How does the heavenly hope "set on him" affect our estimates of worldly pleasures and values?
4. In what way is the attitude of the Methodist Church unlike that of most other churches toward the teaching of entire sanctification?
5. What is the essential element in holiness, especially as taught by Wesley?

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6. What place has effort in the attainment of holiness? Is it all of God's bestowment?
7. Describe the three ways that must be pursued by one who would "purify himself even as he is pure."
8. In urging one to enter the Christian life who is deterred by the high ideal of holiness that it required, how would you reassure him?
9. How shall we test our own fitness for the heavenly state?

V

THE LIFE OF SERVING BIBLE PASSAGES

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?—Micah vi. 6-8.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them. This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.—Luke iv. 16-21.

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And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.—Mark ix. 35.

But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.—Matthew xx. 26.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
—Philippians ii. 5-8.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?—Hebrews i. 14.

PRAYER

O Lord, Our heavenly Father, who by thy blessed Son hast taught us that thou art love, we beseech thee graciously to bless all those who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of their fellow men. Grant unto them clear vision, give them true judgment, courage and perseverance to help those that suffer wrong; and endue them with unfailing love to minister to the poor, the suffering and the friendless. Amen.

—Bishop Thirkield.

STUDY

I

From the standpoint of the world, from the non-Christian ideal, service is

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derogatory, and the position of a servant is distinctly that of an inferior. We have not in this twentieth Christian century got away from this heathen conception. In Jesus's day it went without challenge that command of the service of others, the enjoyment of fruit of the toil of others was a condition of eminence. To rule over other men for the aggrandizement of self was a standard of greatness. But Jesus both by practice and precept established a new criterion of greatness. He measured the altitude of eminence by the measure of service rendered, not by that received. The unselfishness that takes the form of service for others is commended by Jesus, and his life was the supreme exemplification of this principle. The judgment of history, the judgment of God, has approved this principle. "Wherefore also God hath highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus

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Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 9-11.) In the judgment of God the selfishness that seeks enjoyment at the expense of others is not reckoned in the scale of personal excellence. Service is something essential in the government of God. The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches that the angels are "ministering spirits." (Heb. i. 7, 14.)

The pagan conception has not been wholly displaced, but it no longer remains unchallenged. Missionaries, men of science, educators, physicians, philanthropists, statesmen who have applied Jesus's criterion to their lives have left examples the supreme excellence of which cannot be denied. It is only here and there that some eccentric philosopher, such as Nietzsche, arises to defend the ideal of selfishness; but in practice we have not escaped the pagan conception. As selfishly as most of us live, however, the judgments of history are increasingly confirming Jesus's standard. The Hall of

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Fame at New York University was opened twenty-five years ago. Names are inscribed upon its memorial tablets by selection of a jury of one hundred prominent citizens. Fifty-six have thus far been selected. The choices indicate a historical recognition of greatness in service that is significant. There are as many Christian ministers as there are generals and admirals (if we classify Washington as a statesman, rather than a general). There are four educators, including two women, the same number as of ministers. There are fourteen men of letters against nine statesmen and diplomats. There are three philanthropists and reformers, including Frances E. Willard; five scientists and five jurists; and four inventors, one artist, and one actress. The choices in each classification tend to center in the men who have been most eminent in service. Daniel Boone is the one choice of a pioneer, but how appropriate that one of such service to his country should be associated with Washington, Lincoln,

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Beecher, Horace Mann, and Miss Willard!

The General Rules of the Methodist Church, which were prepared early in the Methodist movement by the Rev. John Wesley for the government of his United Societies, admirably condense this New Testament standard of excellence. The first rule forbids doing harm. The second reads:

It is expected of all who continue in these Societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Secondly, By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison;

To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all that we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it."

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By doing good to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; etc.

By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race which is set before them; etc.

Service, then, is an ideal and a condition of the Christian life. It is not incidental to it, but essential. Together with fellowship with the Father and the Son and the faith and hope that are fixed upon the risen Jesus, service forms a third in the trinity of the Christian life. Indeed, service proceeds from all the graces and is associated with them; so that Paul could write to the Thessalonians of their “work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father” (1 Thess. i. 3). God is not unmindful of such a life. “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered

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to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." (Heb. vi. 10, 11.)

II

Jesus's life was a threefold ministry—of preaching, teaching, and healing (Matt. iv. 23). But there were many mighty works by which he relieved the wants of men, such as the feeding of multitudes, "lest they faint by the way." His teaching was largely incidental and arose out of occasions of all sorts. He was often driven to intense controversy by the taunting hypocrisy of the religious leaders of his day. His works of mercy caused positive and heavy drafts upon his strength (Mark v. 30). For the instruction of his disciples he exemplified lowly service by performing the menial work of a slave, and commended this as an example (John xiii. 13–17). The reputation that survived Jesus's days of Incarnate life was that "he went about doing

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good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." (Acts x. 38.)

Some of the leading teachings of Jesus emphasize service. The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke x. 25-37) and the parable of the judgment of the nations (Matt. xxv. 31-46) are especially powerful as presentations of this principle of the Christian life.

III

Christian service is associated with some of the foundation virtues, such as perseverance, industry, and self-control. It is impossible to be a Christian and an idler, a sluggard, a parasite. Here is a significant triad of Paul's: "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." (Rom. xii. 11.) It sometimes falls out that not only are the children of this world wiser in their generation than the children of light, but they put them to shame by their industry.

But the Christian's service is a spiritual service (Rom. xii. 1, R. V.) It is by

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means of this body that we overflow the bounds of personality and touch other personalities. The body is the organ of the soul. The effects of that overflow, or touch upon other lives, will be of a kind determined by the measure in which we render our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable (R. V., 'spiritual') service." Paul exhorts: "Glorify God in your body." (1 Cor. vi. 20.)

Spiritual and physical cease to be distinctions in the Christian life. Consecrated to God, all is spiritual. All forms of service become spiritual, and the body as the organ of the spirit becomes a prophecy of the resurrection life.

Our rule speaks of three kinds of service—to the bodies of men, to their souls, to the household of God, the Church. This test must be applied as unsparingly as any other. We have asked whether we enjoy the mystical fellowship of the Father and the Son, whether we have a hope fixed upon him that is an incentive

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to our living a holy life. Let us now ask whether our life is patterned after that of Jesus in service to our fellow man. It is a test that is more easily applied, possibly more certain in its reactions. Let us read over the Epistle of James and unsparingly apply it to ourselves. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James i. 22.) "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (i. 27.) "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body; what doth it profit?" (ii. 14-16.) "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. . . . Ye

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have heaped up treasure for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." (v. 1-4.) "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (v. 19, 20.)

QUESTIONS

1. What revolutionary change in the ideal of greatness did Christianity introduce?
2. To what extent has the new ideal of Christ superseded the old pagan ideal? To what extent is the new ideal reflected in practice among Christian people?
3. What is the second section of the General Rules of the Methodist Church?
4. Thinking back over our first and fourth studies, what would you name as a trinity of the Christian life?
5. What reputation survived Jesus in the days of the early apostolic Church? (See Acts x. 38.) How had it been gained?
6. How is Christian service related to the foundation virtues, such as industry and self-control?
7. How can service to the bodies of men, service

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performed through the organs of our own bodies, be regarded as a "spiritual service"? (See R. V. Romans xii. 1.)

8. What test set forth in this study must we apply with as perfect sincerity as any derived from our previous studies?

9. What New Testament writing is especially valuable from the point of view of the life of service?

10. If one were unsparingly to apply the Epistle of James, is it possible that he might be a fanatic or a pharisee?

VI

LIFE ETERNAL

BIBLE PASSAGES

I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.—Psalm xvi. 8-11.

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.—Psalm xix. 15.

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. . . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.—John xvii. 2, 3, 24.

In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.—John xiv. 2-3.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on

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me hath everlasting life. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.—John vi. 47, 54.

For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Rom. vi. 23.

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of his Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.—2 Cor. v. 5-6.

This is the true God, and eternal life.—1 John v. 20.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.—Gal. vi. 8.

PRAYER

Almighty God, who, alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; Grant unto thy people, that they may love the things which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—*Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter.*

STUDY

I

Eternal life is an essential article of the Christian faith. In our Creed we say: “I believe in the . . . life ever-

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lasting.” By this we mean nothing less than the unbroken and unending duration of personal, conscious life, with its complement of spiritual and social furnishings. The ancient Hebrews, with other Semitic peoples, believed in a future state, which they called Sheol (translated “hell”), a shadowy place in which existence was on a lower level of enjoyment and achievement than in this. Sometimes the future seemed to them to consist of deprivation of everything that makes life worth while, so that one cries out: “O spare me before I go hence and be no more.” Another, “I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” But even without a doctrine of eternal life, sometimes their trust rose to the height of the two passages quoted from the Psalms; and despite all appearance to the contrary and the popular belief of his time and his people, Job’s prophetic insight caused him to cry out of his living death: “I know that my Redeemer liveth

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and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet without my flesh shall I see God." (Job xix, 25, 26. See R. V.)

Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim. i. 10). For the most part the supreme hope had been latent in the Old Testament revelation; but in Jesus it shone forth with noon-day clearness and completeness. He not only declared it, but showed that it was implicit in the ancient Scripture (Matt. xxii, 31) and was necessary to the interpretation of the words of Scripture and their conception of God. In Jesus's time this truth was generally believed by the Jews, especially the Pharisees, but it was given clearness and certainty in his life and words. The Johannine Gospel is the best source of insight into the essentials of the spiritual life, because it was written by the apostle after he had meditated and lived for many years in the great truths of the

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Deity of Jesus and the life that flows from faith in Jesus. It is also the clearest in its teaching upon the eternal life. Eternal life in John's Gospel is inseparable from Christ (John v. 39, 40). In Jesus's whole outlook upon life the reality and certainty of the life to come more than balance the things that are renounced in this life as incompatible with that future life. Self-renunciation cannot be justified unless there are higher values that are gained with the renunciation of this world. Paul exclaims: "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." (1 Cor. xv. 19.)

In the teaching of both Jesus and Paul eternal life is associated with the belief in the resurrection of the body. (John v. 28, 29; 1 Cor. xv. 4, 20.) It is also bound up with the Christian's calling. The wonderful passage from Philippians marks the height of Paul's aspiration: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made

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conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (Phil. iii. 10-13.)

It is in this certainty of the life to come that the deepest longings of the human heart find assurance and the most essential intuitions of the human person find their sufficient object. Other religions, such as Buddhism and Mohammedanism, have their teachings of a future life; but those of the followers of the Indian sage (who himself did not teach immortality) are horrible and those of Mohammed have little ethical value and belong in an undeveloped superstition rather than in a truly spiritual religion.

II

Jesus's teaching of eternal life is unique in that it makes eternal life to consist in and flow from a personal relation to God. As one of the Collects phrases it, "in knowledge of whom standeth eternal life." At the moment of the withdrawal of the veil from the inner

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sanctuary of his soul, Jesus gives the full definition of eternal life: "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It was an experience of Paul: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." (2 Tim. i. 12.) Of course this knowledge is more like the personal relation of friends than mere intellectual knowledge. In our first study it was treated as the relation between a child and his father; in one that is to follow it is symbolized by friendship. Faith, or belief, which includes personal trust, is also employed with the same meaning. "He that believeth on me hath eternal life." (John vi. 47.) The Old Testament saint who wrote the passage quoted from Psalm 16, had an experience of fellowship with God (Verse 8) that enabled him with confidence to say "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore"

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(verse 11). Here and now the believer in Jesus has eternal life, not as something added to his Christian experience—it is his Christian experience. Eternal life is the life that he now lives by the faith of the Son of God. What he is to enjoy in the world to come is not different from what he has in this world. In much of the old devotional literature the impression was made that the saints expected an entirely new bestowment as the condition of their happiness in the world to come. The New Testament teaching may in some places admit of that interpretation, but prevailingly it is that here and now the disciple of Christ has eternal life. The life of the world to come may change the conditions in which it is lived, but the thing itself will ever remain what it is now through and in the knowledge of God in Christ.

III

Eternal life is the same thing that the Christian experiences here, but its conditions here are made by a material world

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and a mortal body; after death we know only that a separation from the mortal body will have occurred and that conditions of immortality surround the spiritual person. As Paul says, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." (2 Cor. v. 2-4.)

As Jesus associated eternal life with a resurrection, so also did Paul. The new spiritual body becomes the successor of the old body of mortality. When or how this consummation will be effected we do not know; it is possible to glimpse the meaning only through the resurrection of Jesus. The body of his resurrection is the type of the spiritual body that shall be. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (1 Cor. xv. 44.)

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Within the forty days of Jesus's post-resurrection life the transformation had been effected and the glorified, spiritual body ascended, defying gravity and other material conditions. We know little about it; but a spiritual body such as his we also shall have. "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. iii. 20, 21.)

Eternal life must ever be in essence the same. There is one condition that we know of through Jesus's Great Intercession. It throws upon the future life the only perfectly clear and satisfying light. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John xvii. 24.) Our heaven shall be in

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his presence, in a deepening knowledge of him, in a continuous fellowship through which we shall know him as we cannot now know him. Thus eternal life in the future state will be but an enlargement and fulness of the life of faith and love that we have received through him in this temporal state.

IV

There is a dark background to the beauty and glory and certainty of eternal life. We cannot think the thing eternal life without its correlative eternal death. Upon this subject the New Testament is not silent. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 23.) Eternal life is not wholly separable from rewards that are meet for the deeds done in the body; that is in accord with what we see all about us—persons receiving in their lives the inevitable consequences of what they have been thinking, choosing and loving, whether of spiritual value or

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merely fleshly desire; but more essentially it is the natural flowering and fruitage of the vigorous plant of Christian character. A heaven that consists chiefly in the presence of Jesus Christ could not be enjoyed by one to whom he is a stranger. From many lives the light of Christ is excluded. “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.” (John iii. 18, 19.) The New Testament affords no hope that in a future state there will be a break in the continuity of a life of selfishness and unbelief that has been closed to Christ the Source of eternal life. Two powerful passages are sometimes cited in support of a “larger hope.” (1 Peter iii. 18–20; iv. 1–6.) But whatever their full significance, they certainly do not hold out any assurance to those who have here

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rejected Christ that an opportunity will be open to them in the future state to accept him. Our whole New Testament conception of eternal life is of something that is one in the future with the life in the present. The tendency of all forms of sin is to become fixed and their effect upon the soul is to diminish its openness to God and to harden conscience against self-knowledge, until a state shall have been reached in which it is no longer possible to turn. This also is continued into the future state.

On the other hand, moral and spiritual growth, the character that has been built up in the life of faith and unselfishness, persist in the future state. Scientifically speaking, nothing can be lost: the law of the conservation of energy is that, in whatever change of form, energy persists without any diminution. This law has its parallel in the conservation of character. In fact, the law of the conservation of character includes a principle of growth. Virtue becomes so strong by practice that

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at length it becomes quite indestructible; and the holy character with which the soul enters the future state, will there no longer be subject to the vicissitudes of fierce temptation. "So shall we be ever with the Lord." Jesus's prayer will be fully answered: "I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me, where I am." (John xvii. 24.)

Jesus tasted death and all the experiences to which his redeemed are subjected. In the interval between his death on the cross and his resurrection, as we are taught in the New Testament (Eph. iv. 9, 10; Acts ii. 27-31) and as some forms of the Creed declare, "He descended into hell (the place of the dead)." The passages in First Peter, besides confirming this supplement of the gospel, state only that he there in the Spirit preached to the souls of men who had died; certainly those to whom the gospel had never before come. Perhaps such are the souls of children who have never rejected Christ, never become hardened

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in sin, and whose blessed opportunity to see his face and embrace him is there given for the only time possible.

Eternal life is the same thing that we have been studying as the life of Sonship, of Fellowship, of Obedience, of Purifying and of Serving. In such a life there are no elements of death. It partakes of the everlastingness of God.

QUESTIONS

1. How would you contrast the Old Testament and the New Testament views of the life of the world to come?
2. What is the ratio of the teaching of eternal life in the Gospels? In the Epistles of Paul?
3. How is the teaching of eternal life connected with Christ himself in both Gospels and Epistles?
4. In what essentially does Jesus' teaching make life eternal to consist?
5. Relate this teaching to the central truths of our previous studies.
6. How, if in any way, is it possible for death to affect life eternal?
7. How much do we know about the conditions in which life eternal is experienced after death?
8. Is there anything in the present and future experience of life eternal that causes us to think of its dark correlative, eternal death? Is it possible for us to

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think of persons of a certain moral type as possessors of eternal life?

9. Have we any ground in either the Scriptures or reason for anticipating in immortal conditions a reversal of the character that has been built up in mortal conditions?

10. What significance are we authorized to attach to the New Testament passages that speak of Jesus as having descended into the place of departed spirits during the interval between his death and resurrection?

II

A CALL TO ENTER THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

VII

THE GOSPEL: WHY PREACH IT?

BIBLE PASSAGES

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believe.—1 Corinthians xv. 1-11.

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will,

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a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.—1 Corinthians ix. 16-23.

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.—Romans i. 14-18.

PRAYER

O God, who didst send the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, to teach them and lead them into all truth, that they might go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, pour out, we beseech thee,

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the same Holy Spirit upon thy church, that it may send forth the good tidings of great joy unto all people. . . . And while we pray for the outward growth of thy kingdom in the world, we pray also for its inward growth in the hearts of men. . . . Through thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

—*Bishop Thirkield.*

STUDY

I

The word “gospel” (*Gōd-spel*) is a translation into Old English of the Greek and Latin words that mean good tidings. The four memoirs of Jesus that we have in the New Testament are called Gospels because they treat of the life of him whom the apostles proclaimed as the risen Saviour. The preaching of the good news was first, and thus an interest was created in him of whom the apostles testified. The heart of their message was that God had raised Jesus from the dead. How he came to die and what was the significance of his death would naturally become the next subject of interest to those who had believed in him and proved

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his saving power. Thus the large part of the Gospel narratives which gives the teachings and transactions of the last part of Jesus's life and the account of his crucifixion and resurrection. The process was still backward, through the years of preaching and miracle working, which all became of unequaled importance in view of the effect of their faith in him and the proclamation throughout the world; and Matthew and Luke go back to the Virgin birth and infancy in order to account for such a life as his. The actual message of Jesus was the gospel; but the message was accompanied by the life and sealed by the death and effectuated by the resurrection and attested by the sending of the Holy Spirit.

There are in the Old Testament many promises of God's gracious purpose to redeem his people, and in the later prophets especially the promise broadens out to the nations of the world. In this sense the gospel was preached before the coming of Jesus; but Judaism never had

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a universal message, and even the teachings of Jesus, surpassing everything that had ever been known, could not equip the missionary with a message of salvation to the world had not Jesus died a sacrificial death and risen to an everlasting life. He was not a martyr, but a Saviour.

The gospel not only centers in Jesus and testifies of him; the gospel is Jesus himself. Paul says: "We preach Christ." He only has received the gospel who has received Jesus and who lives by him and for him.

The gospel is the good news of God's love by which the attitudes of diffidence, superstition, and fear that seem to be so natural and universal are dispelled and men are induced to trust in God, accepting him as Father and receiving the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. (John iii. 16, 17.)

The gospel is the message of salvation by faith. It imposes no impossible condition. The great world religions, such as

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Buddhism and Mohammedanism, know nothing of salvation by faith. They all impose laborious and impossible conditions by which a human soul, conscious of its sin and helplessness, is bidden to buy salvation through its own effort and accumulations of merit. The distinguishing feature of the gospel is that it offers salvation by faith. (Rom. x. 5-11.)

“The word is nigh thee, even in thy heart and in thy mouth, that is the word of faith which we preach: . . . that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” To this effect is the remarkable testimony of Prof. Max Müller:

In the discharge of my duties as teacher of Sanscrit for forty years I have spent as much time as any man living in the study of the sacred books. The one diapason, whether it be in the Vedas, the

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Brahmans, the Puranas of Siva and Vishnu, the Koran of the Mohammedans, the Zend-Avesta of the Parsees, the Tripitika of the Buddhists—the one refrain through all is salvation by works. Our Bible is a protest. There good works are the outcome of a grateful heart.

To the same effect is this testimony of Ruskin:

I believe that the root of almost every schism and heresy from which the Christian Church has suffered has been the effort of men to earn their salvation rather than to receive it.

II

The character of the gospel itself is a sufficient reason for preaching it. It needs no other commendation than a knowledge of what it is. Paul characterizes it as “the power of God unto salvation” because therein is revealed a righteousness of faith (Rom. i. 16, 17). Preaching the gospel is merely a proclamation of its truths with the authority of

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experience. The Church ordains some men to give their lives to the work of preaching, but it would be a mistake to infer from this that unordained men and women have no gospel message. The possession of the gospel as a fact of experience constitutes an urge to proclaim it. The rapid progress of the early Church against the odds of pagan power and superstition and the venerable and divine system of Judaism was due to the activity of men and women of humble station who knew the saving power of the gospel and declared it (Acts xi. 19–21). Our young people to-day are charged with the duty of proclaiming the gospel.

But let us not detract from the especial value of the proclamation of the message by those who are called of God and set apart by the Church for this purpose. There must be a teaching and a preaching ministry by those who devote themselves, after adequate preparation, to this work.

Without preaching people will never become informed of God's word of grace

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and truth. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. x. 13-17.)

The gospel comes through the personality of the saved. It was in that way that the record which we know as the Gospel came. It was through the personality of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that the evangelic record came down to us. Christ himself wrote no word. He left a life that had become incorporated in the lives of disciples, and of these some wrote of the life as they had seen it, handled it, and heard it. Thus came these precious records. It is thus through saved personality that the gospel will continue to be given to the world. Only a saved person can demonstrate the gospel. It is demonstration, not argument, that men await before believing the gospel and accepting Christ.

III

We have been studying the Christian life under six aspects—the life of sonship, the life of fellowship, the life risen

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with Christ, the purified life, the life of service and eternal life. That life in its manifold aspects is a realization of the gospel. We shall have spent our time for nothing unless we have found or are seeking with all our heart the reality of this life.

If this life is anything to us, we have the argument for preaching it in our way, not from the pulpit perhaps, but none the less truly preaching it. If it is nothing to us, then there is no need to concern ourselves further about it. If it is a reality to us, we have the reason and the urge to testify of it to all to whom we have access. During every revival movement we must try to deliver our message both at the meetings and in a personal way.

How shall we preach this gospel? In four ways: (1) Personally. That may be harder than in public to a congregation, but it yields the richest results. (2) By open testimony in the meetings. By standing up for our Lord with true loyalty in every place. (3) By the embodi-

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ment of the gospel in a holy life. What is written of the ministry especially applies also to the laity. (2 Cor. vi. 1-10.)

(4) By teaching the gospel. In the Sunday school especially our opportunity comes for preaching of this kind. It is not the least important. It is Jesus's own command: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations: . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.)

QUESTIONS

1. Tell briefly how the four Gospels came into being and how they were so named.
2. In a more specific sense, and somewhat in distinction from the fourfold record, what do we mean by "the gospel?"
3. In what respect is salvation according to the gospel of Jesus an absolutely unique process?
4. What do we mean by *preaching* the gospel?
5. Through what channel do the truths of the gospel necessarily come to us?
6. Is it possible to disseminate the gospel except through a person who has tested it and demonstrated it in his own experience?
7. In what four ways can we as laymen preach the gospel?
8. Does the great commission apply to all, or only to ministers?

VIII

A CALL TO POSSESS THE MIND OF JESUS —REPENTANCE

BIBLE PASSAGES

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes.—Matthew xi. 25.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.—Philippians ii. 5.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.—1 Peter ii. 21.

PRAYER

We beseech thee, O thou unwearied One, that thou wilt inspire us with a heavenly virtue. Lift before us the picture of what we should be and what we should do, and maintain it in the light that we may not rub it out in forgetfulness; that we may be able to keep before ourselves our high calling in Christ Jesus. And may we press forward, not as they who have attained or apprehended; may we press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus, with new alacrity, with growing confidence, and with more and more blessedness of joy and peace in the soul. Amen.

—*Henry Ward Beecher.*
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Repentance

STUDY

At a glance the Scripture passages selected may seem as remote as possible from anything relating to the beginnings of the Christian life. They are, in fact, primarily addressed to Christians who are "going on unto perfection." But they have been chosen as the basis of an appeal to begin the Christian life because it will be part of the plan of this study to show that there is no essential difference between the several stages of the Christian life; but, on the contrary, that they proceed from the same source and are in principle the same thing.

I

In the preaching of the great prophets of the Old Testament, of John the Baptizer, greater than they, of Jesus and of his apostles, repentance occupies the first place in point of time and order. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the

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Lord, and he will have mercy, and unto our God and he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. iv. 7.) is the appeal of Isaiah. Micah replies to the fanatical self-righteous of his day, who hoped by gifts and sacrifices to appease an injured God, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Micah vi. 8.) John "preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark i. 4). Jesus took up the cry of John when that great reformer had been shut up in Herod's prison, saying: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark i. 14, 15.) The early preaching of the apostles began with the same note: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts iii. 19.) Repentance, then, is elemental and fundamental. We are concerned to know exactly what is meant by repentance.

Repentance

The word repentance means a change of mind. Now we may begin to see the relevance of the texts we have quoted. These indicate what sort of a change of mind is meant by gospel repentance: it is a change *to* the mind of Christ. It is a taking of Jesus's point of view in place of some other that we have held. There might be any number of changes of mind that could not possibly have any value for the great interest of our life; but this change to Jesus's way of looking at things means everything for us. As there is nothing in our life to which God can be indifferent, accepting the mind of Jesus includes everything in our life (Heb. iv. 12, 13). The beginning of repentance is a beginning to learn of Jesus; it is incipient discipleship.

Our texts are rightly applied to the advanced attainments of the Christian life; but thereby they are not excluded from its inception, for the whole thing is discipleship, and its progress is in the line of its beginning—learning of him (Matt.

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xi. 29). Maturity is merely a larger appropriation of the mind of Jesus.

We sometimes speak of conversion as of a completed act by which God has renewed the soul in the image of Jesus. But that renewing is a process of which conversion is the beginning. Conversion rather means the accompanying act of the will by which one turns into the way of Jesus as he has accepted the mind of Jesus as his guide and law of life. Repentance is taking the *mind* of Jesus; conversion is the corresponding taking of the *way* of Jesus. Do not let us complicate these things that the Bible has made very simple. We sometimes come into clash with standardized experiences of religion. Let them fall before the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.

II

Repentance is taking Jesus's point of view concerning God. Probably we all have constructed something of a rude

Repentance

creed in which an idea of God is the first article. What do we think of God? That is a question upon which almost all else depends. Like George Eliot, one may regard God as "unthinkable." Nevertheless, *that* is a thought of him. Like Mohammed, one might think of him as a rather good-natured despot. But it is our own thought of him that chiefly concerns us.

Jesus regarded God as Father. Some of us are like the prodigal in Jesus' story —in a far country treasuring very wrong thoughts of our Father; some of us may be like the elder brother in the same story —rather better in our way of life, but equally mistaken about our Father (Luke xv. 11-24). If we really believed that God is a loving Father, profoundly and intimately concerned about us, it would make a vast change in the life of most of us. A soldier in the Confederate army was sentenced to be shot as a deserter. A chaplain tried to prepare him for the firing squad that he was to face at sun-

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rise the following morning, but without success. A Catholic priest then went to him, although the soldier was a Protestant. When he left, the condemned man was calm and ready to face death. "What did you do to him?" asked an officer. "I showed him that God is his Father and that he loves him," said the priest; "that is all."

Jesus regarded God as the "righteous Father" (John xvii. 25). He is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." Jesus taught that God's judgment goes to the heart and motive of things (Matt. v. 27; vi. 1, etc.). Our idle words even have for the Judge a significance that we are loth to attach to them (Matt. xii. 36). With such a view of God we shall not be much given to saying: "It doesn't matter." Moral value will attach to acts and states of heart that we have not taken seriously. Much of our repenting will come about through such a changed view of God's righteousness; but we shall never be discouraged so long as we keep

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in mind the great complementary truth that God is our loving Father.

III

Jesus's point of view concerning ourselves is the complement of his point of view concerning God. We are in this equally liable to be in error, the more so because we love ourselves and are disposed to condone our own faults. Jesus said that the Spirit of truth would convict the world of sin because they believe not on him (John xvi. 9). That is, their sin is in not taking his point of view and thinking his thoughts and cherishing his dispositions.

We test ourselves by his life. It makes us ashamed to think that we have fallen so far short of a beautiful and productive life. Of course we cannot be and never could have been all that he was; but the shame is that we have been content to be something entirely different, that we have not made it our plan to be of his kind.

We must accept responsibility for our

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shortcoming. Our conscience must admit that our life of wide variation from the ideal and standard of Jesus is the result of choosing that it should be so. This is guilt. When guilt is like this—seen in God's light—it is sin. Let us always keep in mind, however, that our sin is in the lack of conformity of our life with the life of Jesus. We have judged ourselves by some other standard than his. This appeal is that we accept his standard of judgment and lay down beside our own life the rule of his life. To do this is to repent. This is the only safe rule by which to estimate our life.

IV

There is something deeper than anything we do; it is our very, essential self. If that is incompatible with Christ, of course everything is wrong. But it will be worth our while to think somewhat of the things we do as they may be regarded from Christ's point of view.

There is a life of selfishness instead of

Repentance

a life of service. Jesus's program was one of serving, not being served. How much of our life is based upon the assumption that selfishness is better than self-giving (Matt. xx. 25-28)?

There is a life of worldly ambition that is not far removed from the life that is content to profit by the ministry of others. It places its hope upon attainments in this world. It afflicts statesmen, who deem the possession of authority and the attainment of eminence above serving for the good of their country; it afflicts churchmen, who aspire after ecclesiastical preferment rather than the utmost giving of self in ministries; it afflicts women, who prostitute their beauty to gain social distinction rather than cultivate the graces of a Christ-like character in order that their beauty may be of the "hidden man of the heart" (1 Peter iii. 3, 4); it afflicts business men, whose obsession is the gaining of wealth instead of the employment of their resources for the good of mankind. The mind of Christ, who

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"thought it not a prize to be clutched at to be on an equality with God" (Phil. ii. 7), would transform such ambitions. Taking his point of view will dethrone them in our hearts (Luke xxii. 24-27).

Probably our young people are as much in error in the matter of their choice of pleasures as in any other respect. What do we do when we are free to do what our nature prompts us to do? That is often the truest test of life. Yet it is especially important that we take the mind of Jesus with reference to our pleasures. It is often the case that here the test is most severe as well as most significant. Will we accept Jesus's estimate of our dances and immodest swimming costumes and Sabbath desecrations? That is often the crucial question.

QUESTIONS

1. In what principle do we find warrant for basing an appeal to enter the Christian life upon passages addressed to Christian believers?
2. What place does the preaching of repentance have in the prophetic message, whether of the Old or the New Testament?

Repentance

3. What exactly does the word *repentance* mean?
4. Do you understand by conversion a completed act or a progressive process? How is conversion related to repentance?
5. In what way is repentance a correction of a sinner's view of God?
6. In what way is repentance a change of view concerning oneself?
7. What do we mean by guilt and sin?
8. Beside our wrong views of God and self and the sinful deeds that have proceeded from these errors, with what deeper thing of evil have we to do?
9. Apply the test of the mind of Jesus to your life —its ambitions, its choices, its pleasures, its secret cogitations. Have you not cause to repent?

IX

A CALL TO MAKE GOD REAL—FAITH BIBLE PASSAGES

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.—Habakkuk ii. 1-4.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.—Hebrews xi. 1.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in the time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.—Hebrews i. 1-3.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so

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it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.—Matthew xi. 25-27.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.—John xiv. 6.

PRAYER

O God of heaven above and earth beneath, Thou art the constant hope of every age—the reliance of them that seek thee with thoughtfulness and love. We own thee as the guardian of our pilgrimage; and when our steps are weary we turn to thee, the mystic companion of our way, whose mercy will uphold us, lest we fall . . . Yet when we seek to draw nigh to thee thou art still above us, like the heavens. O thou that remainest in the height and coverest thyself with the cloud thereof! behold, we stand around the mountain where thou art; and if thou wilt commune with us, the thunder from thy voice of love shall not make us afraid. Call up a spirit from our midst to serve thy will, and take away the veil from all our hearts, that with the eye of purity we may look upon the bright and holy countenance of life. . . . For life and death we trust ourselves to thee as disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.

—James Martineau.

STUDY

I

Not only is faith the pivotal attitude in New Testament teaching; it is interpreted

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by the New Testament as the heart of Old Testament religion. The magnificent passage quoted from Habakkuk—"My just one shall live by his faith"—is one of Paul's foundation stones for his great system of teaching. Like the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul interprets the life and power of the Old Testament saints in the light of faith; particularly Abraham, whom he cites as the "father of all those who believe in Jesus." Paul is in this exactly in accord with his Lord and Master. By Jesus salvation is based upon faith in himself, and Paul refuses to know any other righteousness than that which is by "the faith of the Son of God," "who loved me, and gave himself for me." Every great revival and reformation in the Christian world has been brought about through the preaching of the doctrine of justification by faith. Luther called out a living branch from the dead Roman Church by preaching the gospel of faith, and the reflex was such that the Roman Church

itself became revitalized and entered upon a great era of missionary advance, while newly born Protestantism, losing its grip upon this fundamental, became a school of barren doctrinal controversy. Sometimes religious thinkers speculate upon what the next great revival is to be and on what teaching it is to be based. If history has any meaning, it is idle thus to guess: the next revival, like all others, will come with a new and fresh emphasis upon the New Testament teaching that we are saved by faith.

While admitting this proposition, no doubt there are some persons and groups of persons who would begin by disputations as to doctrines and interpretations of faith as an intellectual or creedal system, as an assent to certain propositions. But this is wholly to misunderstand what New Testament faith is. Its least element is assent to certain creedal propositions. This is not to deny that there are certain great truths underlying faith; but it is to shift the emphasis from the defini-

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tion of these truths to a personal relationship to him of whom they may be affirmed. We do not need to start by proving certain doctrines; and even if we were to prove them, we should not have attained faith; we should still be in our sins, although as orthodox as the devil.

According to the New Testament, faith must be simple, because it is required of every one. If in our minds it has become complicated, let us try to reduce it to its plainest terms and endeavor to follow Jesus and Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews. I think we shall then find that faith may be reduced to the conception and act of making God real; bringing him out of the field of intellectual affirmation, theological dogma, and poetic sentimentalism into the place of a real experience.

II

The impulse to be religious is native to human nature. The benefits that accrue from religion are desired by all normal persons. There are many things in the

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way of our realization of these desires of our hearts. Let us think of one of the most common and most powerful: the sense of unreality in it all. *Things* are very real to us—what we require for life and what appeals to us as source or means of enjoyment. Human persons are very real to us, or at least we think they are because we see their outward bodily manifestations. The demands of this life press heavily upon us: parents are rightly concerned about the temporal welfare of their children. But the things of religion often seem very unreal by contrast with all the things that press upon us from the angle of our worldly interests.

From this unreality in religion one of two consequences is likely to flow: people become pharisees, like the chief religionists of Jesus's earthly days, or they become skeptics. The pharisee is one to whom religion is external; to whom it consists in doing things more or less trivial. It may be these externals will take the form

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of Christian sacraments or prayers; the effect is the same: there is something real about it, but the reality is not God, it is in things; it is therefore not better than pure worldliness, but it is misleading, inasmuch as this form of worldliness takes the name and claims the sanctions of religion. It can persecute men for differing from it. The other consequence is a denial of the possibility of true religion; an ascription of religion to the mind and soul that seem to need it; its interpretation as an invention of the hungry human heart designed to satisfy its own cravings.

But this is not the whole story. The realism of things does not go without some challenge from the common mind. Many people who would shrink from claiming an experience of religion act upon the conviction that God is and that he is concerned with their deeds and choices. They are honest and pure and have some outlook upon a life to come because they believe in God. There may

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be but small emotional reaction, yet to some extent God is real, else they would not be so influenced by a conception of his will and of their duty to him. Faith is an extension and perfection of this initial ethical sense of God, the existence of which no one can deny.

III

There is an experience of the soul that makes God very real, call it by the name faith or what you will. Far back in the records of God's dealing with men stands out in high relief the titan figure of Abraham, the whole significance of which is that God was more real to him than things. An inner call to go out from an idolatrous environment, in order to establish a new line of faith in God, was stronger than ties of patriotism and kinship. A permanent spiritual realm meant so much to him that he despised the luxury of a city life that his great wealth would have afforded him and lived in a moving tent, parable of his hope. An

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aged man, to whom the natural genesis of children was impossible, he did not doubt that he would become the father of nations. Confronted by the alternatives of disobeying what he deemed the voice of God and slaying the son of his hope, he did not hesitate to offer up Isaac, believing that God was able to raise him from the dead. The reality of God to Abraham is the explanation of that unparalleled career, and he is known as the father of those who have faith.

With Abraham the whole matter was one of personal relationship to God. With Moses it was the same thing. He talked face to face with God. To Jesus God was so real that sometimes a glory from his presence transformed even the outward appearance of the Son of Man. On the way to Damascus Saul the Pharisee was introduced to an experience of the reality of God that never left him; even when voyaging on the devoted vessel, the angel of the Lord stood by him. We do not need to go to the Bible for

Faith

examples of faith that makes God real. After his Aldersgate experience in May, 1738, John Wesley lived in consciousness of the reality of God. God is real to the missionary who leaves kindred and native land to carry a message of God to men who know not that "he is not far from every one of us." A minister of our own Church told me that toward daybreak one morning he awoke with an almost unbearable consciousness of God; the very atmosphere of his room seemed surcharged with the presence of God. There could be no doubt of it.

IV

The tremendous certainty of God of which we are speaking cannot be attained by reasoning or logical proofs such as testimony gives to facts of history or demonstration to a mathematical theorem. It lies in another realm of experience, which we may name Personality—that is, it consists in the making of himself known as a Person to a person. It

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is impossible for one to know in this human relationship a person, except as that person may reveal himself. We may know things about each other, but it is only when one opens his nature in confidence to another that person is known by person. Thus we shall, first of all, have to realize that it is by faith alone that we are to know God and that his self-impartation is his response to our faith.

One may cry out like Job: "O that I knew where I might find him!" If so, his perplexity needs not last long. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. . . . The brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." There are two ways in which we might begin our quest for an experience of God. One is the philosopher's route, which proposes to reason to the logical conclusion that there is a God. The philosopher may reach

that conclusion, but he will not thereby have achieved an experience of God. His proposition, however true, will still be only a real proposition, not the reality of God. The other way is to begin with Jesus Christ and through him come to a knowledge of God that is real and personal and that admits of no doubt. Men take the wrong road when they fail to remember that Jesus is "the way and the truth and the life." Faith starts with him.

Jesus is on a plane upon which we can reach him; that is, he is a real person of Gospel report. What is said about him in the Gospels is a sufficient basis for a trial. If he is a living Person, of such character as the Gospel records report, he will certainly be true to his own word. As the great Livingstone said: "We have his word for it, and he is a gentleman of the first water, and that's the end on't." Jesus himself challenged men to put him to the test (1) on the basis of his holy life (John x. 37, 38) and (2) on the basis

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of a fair experiment (John vii. 17, 37).

This is the order of faith and its revelations: First, contemplation of the faultless life of Jesus; second, an utter willingness to put him to the test by doing the things that his life commends and renouncing the things that his life condemns. If anyone will follow this direction, he will find God. God will become unto him real. That experience will be his justification by faith. He will cease to take comfort or to have hope in himself, and will find his comfort and his hope in God. Christ will become to him "God in Christ."

"That one face, far from vanish, rather grows
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Becomes my universe that feels and knows."

QUESTIONS

1. From a study of the Old Testament Prophets and the New Testament interpretation of their teaching what place would you assign to faith?
2. What place has faith in the teaching of Jesus and Paul?
3. What place has the preaching of justification by faith had in the history of Christianity?
4. Is faith essentially assent to certain propositions

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about God and Christ, as, for example, in the Creed? If not, what essentially is faith?

5. What do you find to be the most serious obstacle to real religion—the religion of faith? In what two ways especially is the strength of this obstacle seen?

6. To Abraham, Moses and Paul what was the essential thing in faith? What was the difference between Wesley's faith before and after his Aldersgate Street experience?

7. How may one gain the great certainty of God that is the essential element of faith?

8. Does faith begin or end with Jesus?

X

A CALL TO THE FRIENDSHIP OF JESUS— CONSECRATION

BIBLE PASSAGES

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.—John xv. 12-15.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friends. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.—Exodus xxxiii. 11.

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.—James ii. 23.

PRAYER

O thou who art the Light of the minds that know thee, the life of the souls that love thee, and the strength of the thoughts that seek thee; help us so to know thee that we may truly love thee, so to love thee that we may fully serve thee, whose service is perfect freedom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—*Gelasian Sacramentary.*

Consecration

STUDY

I

Consecration is a great word in the Christian vocabulary. What it stands for is a great fact in life. It has become almost monopolized by religion, but has not therefore been preserved from all evil association. It signifies the dedication as sacred to a person or a cause or more specifically for a religious purpose. The moral value of consecration must depend upon the person or cause to which one is consecrated. In ancient Semitic and other heathen religions there were lascivious rites of worship to which women were consecrated; there may be a consecration to an evil cause.

An act of consecration is something that every soul, in proportion to its greatness, craves. It is a little nature indeed, and one lost in selfishness, that does not feel an urgency to make a bestowal of self upon some person or cause that is worth while. This craving is often gratified in marriage, in which two persons

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renounce self, each to find in the love of the other a larger self. Those who do not marry often find a cause to which they consecrate self with as great, or even greater, spiritual benefit. One cannot think of the late Frances E. Willard as consecrated in marriage to one person, so great and wonderful was her consecration to the great cause of temperance reform. Miss Jane Addams is a similar example. Paul was unmarried, probably a widower from his young manhood, but in his calling he found a greater consecration. But the supreme consecration, in order to satisfy us fully, must be religious; it must have an object so full and so great and so divine that it can and should engross our whole soul.

Consecration is an aspect of sainthood. The ordinary New Testament name for Christian is saint (Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2, etc.). The holiness of these early Christians was not perfection, however. They were sadly wanting and often presented discouraging aspects of character to Paul

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and his fellow apostles. Indeed, the apostles themselves did not always appear as perfected (Gal. ii. 11 ff.). Nevertheless, they were in the way of becoming holy because they had at least committed themselves to a life of faith and the following of Jesus Christ. This life could have no other outcome than full conformity with him (1 John iii. 2). Consecration is the way of sainthood for the Christian, and its objects are Jesus Christ and his kingdom.

II

Friendship is one of the beautiful and appealing terms in which Jesus enshrines the life of consecration to him. His disciples he called "friends" (John xv. 12-15). The term had been applied to Old Testament saints, such as Abraham and Moses, but its full meaning in their case could not be brought out as in the other. Friendship involves commitment of self to another self. Acquaintance is far from friendship. Coöperation may obtain without friendship. People may live

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together without real friendship, because in these cases there may be lacking the element of self-giving. The classic example of David and Jonathan best illustrates what friendship really is (1 Sam. xviii. 1-4, etc.). Few friendships are as perfect in degree, but all friendships have in them these elements of admiration and self-giving.

The friendship between Jesus and his disciples is an initial self-giving on Jesus's part. We might think of his coming to earth as a part of it, but it is more nearly within our grasp to think of what he did after he had come to the earth. (1) He took them into his confidence. He was ever opening his mind and heart to them. In the proportion in which they could receive his words he was ever revealing the inner meaning of his life. A perfect friendship should have no secrets. But sin has so marred our nature that we can seldom be wholly open even with our best friends. Jesus could be wholly open with his friends. He showed them all

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things he had received of his Father—that was the fullness of his self-impartation. (2) It is on his part. Is it on ours? It is possible on our part also, because we know that he knows us already. Our vain desire to conceal what is worst and enhance what is best in us cannot operate where he is concerned. We crave such a friendship because we feel it imperative that we confess the worst in us, and there is no one else to whom we can make this confession. (3) But there are longings and aspirations that no one can understand but this Friend. For us all “some sweet hope lies deeply buried from human eyes.” Diffidence conceals what is best, as shame conceals what is worst in us. But Jesus’s impartation of himself calls it all forth.

“I could not do without thee;
No other friend can read
The spirit’s strange, deep longings,
Interpreting its need:
No human heart could enter
Each dim recess of mine,
And soothe and hush and calm it,
O blessed Lord, like thine.”

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(4) Friend strengthens friend. This is so on a lower plane of friendship. There is power in a personal overflow to give strength. We sit and touch the hand of a friend in distress, and do nothing else; but he feels stronger because of that touch. Jesus's friendship has surer word and work of help and comfort. After his long life of hypocrisy, the minister in Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter" calls upon the woman he has wronged to stand by him and strengthen him for his confession. How often a friend lends us grace! The always adequate grace comes from Jesus. (5) In human friendships we sometimes see the stronger nature overcoming the weaker. This occasions us solicitude, if for no other reason, because we fear there may be a loss of personal force and independence, lest one become a dependent, a parasite. In Jesus's friendship the stronger nature does indeed overcome the weaker, and there is a constant tendency to conformity with him; but this assimilation is of character, not

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of personality. We do indeed become like him, but our own personality is enhanced and developed beyond the power of a selfish life. There arises even a new appreciation of self, as one becomes anew impressed with the Divine personality of Jesus Christ. Latent energies of the soul are brought into activity by the touch of the friendship of Jesus. (6) A soul is stirred to a larger life and a more ennobling and serviceful life by contact with Jesus Christ. The greatest characters have been those upon whom the Spirit of Christ rested in this self-impartation, and who responded in kind according to their degree of strength.

Our part is the full devotion of ourselves to this friendship with Jesus. It implies that he has something to gain from us. In the days of the Incarnation he showed that he needed human fellowship (John vi. 66, 67); he needed human support in the hour of his extremity (Matt. xxvi. 36-45).

What he needs now is our service and

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testimony in accomplishing his work on earth. Nor may we declare that he is indifferent to the communion and fellowship of prayer as well as work. In the mystery of his Divine-human, though glorified, nature the expressions of our friendship in the spirit may be, doubtless are, prized by him.

III

Consecration to Christ and his cause is friendship for him and coöperation in his work. In a certain sense he requires of us testimony. We may not remain silent when he is disparaged and reviled and crucified afresh. He has brethren here below who may be in need of our help. Shall we allow the friends of our Friend to lack the offices of friendship? Is any man or woman to be treated indifferently when such are dear to him? He has a message for the world. It is entrusted to his friends. He can deliver it only through them.

Consecration in prayer is the other side

Consecration

of that friendship. It is the expressive side of friendship. Our love will grow cold unless we continually tell him of it; our appreciation of him will become a memory unless we company with him.

QUESTIONS

1. In what consists the moral character and value of consecration?
2. What is the difference, if any, between a life of consecration and that usual in the New Testament conception of a Christian?
3. In what human relationship do we find the most beautiful and most complete exemplification of consecrated life?
4. In what way did Jesus become the supreme Friend of his first disciples? In what ways does friendship describe his attitude toward us?
5. In this friendship with Jesus has he anything to gain from us; or is it in fact, only grace, not truly friendship?
6. In what two ways especially do we express the consecration of our friendship for Jesus?

XI

A CALL TO GET THE CHARACTER OF JESUS—SANCTIFICATION

BIBLE PASSAGES

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea Lord: thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, feed my sheep.—John xxi. 15-17.

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.—1 Corinthians xvi. 22.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.—Romans i. 8-10.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and

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all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger and ye took me not in: naked and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.—Matthew xxv. 31-46.

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PRAYER

O eternal God, who hast taught us by thy holy Word that our bodies are temples of thy Spirit. Keep us, we most humbly beseech thee, temperate and holy in thought, word and deed, that we, with all the pure in heart, may see thee, and be made like unto thee in thy heavenly kingdom; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

—*Bishop Thirkield.*

STUDY

I

I heard of a man who accounted for his becoming a member of the Church on a certain occasion by saying that the evangelist who was making the proposition “let down the bars so low” that he felt sure that he could never get into the Church on easier terms than were then offered; so he closed the transaction immediately as a good bargain. We cannot measure the tender mercy of God toward those who are willing to seek his face and do his will; neither can we measure the holiness of him who commands: “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” Great as is the compassion of God for his erring chil-

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dren, he is a false teacher who lowers the standard of holiness that God has set before us and without which "no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14). Holiness or sanctification, is the great ideal of the Christian life (Phil. iii. 13-15). Anything less degrades God himself and paralyzes the best powers of the Christian. A holy God cannot require less; a worthy conception of God cannot accept an inferior requirement.

All this may seem reasonable enough; yet it may also become a source of discouragement to one who contemplates entering the Christian life, and it may cause despair to one who has already taken upon himself the yoke of discipleship. But this needs not be the case at all, if we consider also the real nature of that new life, the goal of which is holiness. The new life to which we are called is the life the Spirit of God inspires in the soul. It is the life that Christ lived out through the same Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who has been promised

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to those who accept Jesus, is the Spirit of Jesus, and his mission is to make Jesus real in the life of the world and in the life of the Christian (John xvi. 7-11). The desire, the impulse to become a follower of Jesus is initiated by this same Spirit of Jesus, and in that initial movement of the soul toward him there is evidence of the working of the Spirit of Jesus, which contains also the promise of the consummation in the Christlike or holy character (Phil. i. 6; 1 Thess. v. 24). We should not assume that God has placed before us an undertaking that is too difficult for us to accomplish. On the contrary, we should assume that he has also made it possible, and that in the very difficulties that may be so evident he has concealed a compensative gracious help. The task is adjusted to the strength available. Young people especially must respond to a "high calling of God" (Phil. iii. 14; Eph. i. 18, 19). Power to live a holy life is for him who is willing to do his will.

II

The essence of the new life to which we are called by the Spirit of Christ is love. Does that simplify our problem? To begin with, it places it upon the basis of getting the character of Jesus. If the Spirit who works in us is the Spirit of Jesus, he works in us for the reproduction of the character of Jesus—that is, we are to become such as he was (John xiii. 13–17). That character was and is love (John xiii. 1). His command to his disciples is that they love one another (John xiii. 34, 35); he sums up the law as love to God and man (Matt. xxii. 34–40); his standard of judgment is love in action (Matt. xxv. 31–46); and the apostolic summary is to the same effect (Rom. xiii. 8–10; 1 John iv. 7–21). To acquire the character of Jesus, then, is simply to love (Gal. vi. 2).

What is this love that is enjoined upon us and that is the last analysis of the Christian life and the beginning and the

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consummation alike? Can we love simply because we will to love? Or is not love something that comes unsought because of something in us that answers to something in the one we love? It is both. *It comes by willing to love*, because when that will is present we shall put ourselves in the way of loving and under influences that tend to generate love. By studying the character of Jesus the moral elements within us are brought to the highest approval, sometimes enthusiasm like that of Sydney Lanier:

But thee, but thee, O sovereign Seer of time,
But thee, O poet's Poet, wisdom's Tongue,
But thee, O man's best Man, O love's best Love,
O perfect Life in perfect labor writ,
Of all men's Comrade, Servant, King or Priest—
What *if* or *yet*, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,
What least defect or shadow of defect,
What rumor tattled by an enemy,
Of inference loose, what lack of grace
Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's, or death's,
O what amiss may I forgive in thee,
Jesus, good Paragon, thou crystal Christ.

There is already something like Christ in one who can admire the wonders of his

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character. *The second thing in willing to love Christ is a deliberate imitation of him.* Imitation is the greatest factor in education; it is the method by which the ideal is acquired. We can start in by applying the things we have learned of Christ to our own lives. A wise teacher of the Bible instructed the members of his class in the Life of Christ each to choose one of the virtues in Christ and apply it to his own life for a week, if only as a laboratory experiment. The result was an enthusiastic imitation of Christ, not as a laboratory experiment, but as a spiritual love. We can conscientiously obey Christ, recognizing him as our Lord, as the final word upon moral duty. In these ways self will pass from the center and Christ will become the heart of our life. That is love, for love is unselfing. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John xiv. 21-24.)

But how shall we fulfill the second table of the law? How love our neighbor as ourselves? We certainly cannot find

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in our brother man, with all his imperfections and flaws of character, even at its best, the charm that we find in Jesus. No; but we shall find, if we search, something that is worth God's love—at least something that has received God's love. The great judgment parable in Matthew xxv, in which the criterion is the works of mercy to fellow man, identifies all men in their need and poverty with Jesus. If that is the case, we cannot treat them in any other way than one that is appropriate to love. In this case love is not emotional; it is rational, an inference. It is an extension of the love we have for Christ to those whom he loves and with whom he identifies himself. But here also we shall find that obedience becomes the organ of spiritual discernment. In this he that doeth his will shall know of the doctrine. The passion for humanity comes only to him who toils in self-sacrifice for his fellow man. If you thought you could find Jesus, the real Presence, in ministries of charity, would you not do

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these works? Well, that is where you will surely find him and learn to love your fellow man for his sake.

III

The difficulties of a life of love, of conformity with Christ, may appear great because we fail to recognize that such a life is a process. We do well to emphasize conversion as an instantaneous turning to God, often accompanied by emotional states of great joy and an assurance of acceptance with the Father; but we do not well to suppose that the Christian life has been accomplished in this way. It is a process of applying Christ to our life in ever greater completeness. It is a road that must be traveled, every foot of it. We are not authorized to expect any airplane flights or short cuts. If it is sometimes toilsome, sometimes painful, that also may be expected (Matt. xvi. 24-26). But it is a great thing to be able to subject every issue to the test of love, love as shown in the life of Jesus.

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Not our states of feeling, but our application of his life to our life is the test of love. We may answer with Peter: "Thou knowest that I love thee."

QUESTIONS

1. How do you estimate the teaching that lowers the moral requirements of the gospel?
2. How is the very high, the perfect standard of Christ's calling, saved from effecting discouragement, if not despair, in our imperfect lives?
3. Reduce the new life to its essential moral quality. How is that quality related to the life and character of Jesus?
4. If love is the essence of the Christian life, and that love is in the love of Christ, how may we attain it?
5. The complementary love for our fellow-men—how may we attain it?
6. Is the perfect love that Christ requires of us an attainment through a process or is it a sudden bestowal? That is, does God do it all as an act of grace, or are we co-workers in our full salvation?

XII

A CALL TO TAKE A STAND—CONFESSIO:N: THE CHURCH

BIBLE PASSAGES

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.—2 Corinthians vi. 17, 18.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.—Acts ii. 41, 42, 47.

Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.—Acts xi. 22, 23.

PRAYER

Lord, we beseech thee, to keep thy household the Church in continual godliness; that through thy protection it may be free from all adversities and

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devoutly given to serve thee in good works, to the glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

—*Collect for the Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.*

STUDY

I

In view of the emphasis that we place upon joining the Church as a Christian obligation, it may seem a little singular that we find no distinct injunction to that effect in the New Testament. But such an obligation is implied in the entire New Testament teaching concerning the Church. The Church is an integral part of the Christian system. "My Church" is Jesus's possessive term as he promises that he will found it. It is cherished by the risen Christ, and he will ultimately present it to himself unblemished and glorious (Eph. v. 24-27). Paul not only uses the intimate figure of marriage, but teaches that the relation between Christ and the Church is vital; it is the body, of which he is the Head (Col. i. 18). In the Revelation we have a symbolic repre-

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sentation of the glorified Son of Man, holding in his hand seven stars, which represent the "angels" of the Churches, and walking in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, which stand for the "seven Churches" or the Church on the field of history (Rev. i. 12, 13, 10).

During the incarnate ministry Jesus did not organize a Church. It was the Spirit of Jesus operating in the lives of his disciples that caused the Church to come into being. It was inevitable that the early followers of Jesus should have come together as the result of the community of experience in him that they desired to share with one another and as a means of conserving and extending this experience. They had before them the model of the synagogue, which during the days of Jewish captivity had come into being because of the necessities of their situation. If there had been no inner motive of brotherly love and fellowship in the Spirit, the disciples of Jesus would have been forced into some

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organized life by the pressure of the hostile world without.

There is a good deal of criticism of the Church to-day that finds expression in literary form and in a general attitude of indifference, if not antipathy. But this is not peculiar to our times. In all times the Church has come in for adverse criticism and has usually deserved it. Neither to-day nor in the times past has this criticism been wholly by irreligious or scoffing persons. There are earnest souls that are seriously skeptical of the value of organized Christianity; they are religious, but ask whether the Church has not outlived its usefulness and whether we should not now expect some other mode of Christian life and some other channel of spiritual influence. For our present purpose it is enough that we recognize the fundamental thing that seems to give occasion for such criticism. It is that the Church has a human foundation, although it has a divine builder. Jesus's original declaration was that he

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would found his Church upon Peter, and of course the other apostles. (Compare Matthew xvi. 18 and Ephesians ii. 20.) Human elements in the Church cause variations from the divine ideal. Paul confessed: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." (2 Cor. iv. 7.) The Church, like the persons who compose its ministry and membership, is in the process of being perfected. It has Christ's presence and blessing, but sadly impeded in expression of his character. But there is the promise that it shall be presented without blemish before him in love.

Although our Christian faith comes to us mediated through the Church, and while Christianity is at first perceived in the concrete embodiment of the Church, it is worth while to ask what we mean by the Church. There are two very different answers. (1) One answer makes the Church a visible united organization, divinely authenticated, the organ of the Holy Spirit in the world, furnished with a priesthood and sacraments through

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which the grace of the gospel is administered to men. (2) The other makes the Church consist of the whole number of those who believe in Jesus and follow him, whether within or without such an organization as we usually think of as a Church. Denominationalism is something that comes in between these two, claiming some of the marks of the imperial Church, but admitting other similar denominations to be parts of the Church. The first definition of the Church is that of Rome or the English Church. It is great and beautiful and powerful, but cannot be found in the New Testament. It is an outworking of logic and history. As for the second, it must find place for the organization of Christians under some constitution that enables them to possess a corporate life in Christ, a Church that is no mere definition, but a social reality. For our purposes such is the Church; such are the Churches; and in their aggregate they compose “the holy catholic Church.”

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II

Those who would live in Christ have need of the Church because they need the fellowship of other believers. One half of the law is love to God; the other half is love to one's fellow man. One side of the Christian's mystical experience is fellowship with Christ (1 John i. 3, 7); the other is fellowship with other Christians (1 John i. 7). We need the Church because it is a channel of Christ's grace. Where two are agreed as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them. Where two or three are gathered together in his name, he is in the midst (Matt. xviii. 19, 20.) We need the Church because it is the organ of discipline or the testing of the consistency of the Christian life. Its ideals are sometimes low, but always higher than those of the surrounding world. These it applies as rule of conduct (Matt. xviii. 15-18).

The Church preserves some of the

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supreme values of life. Without it apparently these would have been lost. (1) The Christian testimony has been preserved in the Church. Our individual witnessing comes and goes, but there has emanated from the Church a testimony through the centuries of the resurrection of Jesus and the presence of his Spirit in the world to-day (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

“O where are kings and empires now,
Of old that went and came;
But, Lord, thy Church is praying now,
A thousand years the same.”

(2) The Church preserves the tradition and interpretation of the faith. This interpretation, it is true, needs constantly to be corrected as new knowledge becomes available. Theology is a growing science, like all other branches of knowledge; nevertheless, we should be in a bad way if we had to begin all over with each generation. (3) Indeed, our progress in faith depends upon the Church. The stimulus of outside knowledge is often of great use in the Church. Modern sci-

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ence has profoundly influenced Christian thinking for good; but it is in the Church that the forward movement of the faith occurs. (4) The social morals of civilization are preserved by the Church. But for its higher standard, based upon divine revelation, there would be a constant downward tendency by which what we call Christian civilization would perish in the muck of vice as did ancient Rome. (5) Much that was once the peculiar function of the Church has been undertaken by the community. This is the case with charity, education, and healing. These activities originated in the Church and were once the monopoly of the Church. It is a good thing that they have been assumed by the community. But the vital and genetic power of the Church has not become exhausted. It must be maintained because it has larger contributions to make to civilization and life. There are social questions to settle and international relations to adjust in the name of Christ to which it is

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the present calling of the Church to contribute.

The Church stands as a challenge to the world in the name of a spiritual life that the world neither has nor believes in. Its very buildings, its teaching of the future world, its call to self-abnegation, and its outward aspect of separateness from the world declare that there is a spirit in man, that the soul is more than the body, the life more than meat and raiment. It shows that material things may be charged with a spiritual message and that buildings and organizations can speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance.

III

We need the Church as a means of taking a stand for Christ, as a place in which to find our cross of discipleship, a base upon which to confess our discipleship before men (1 John iv. 15; Matt. x. 32; Rom. xiv. 11). In case the Church has become worldly, then the Church

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itself is the sphere of our confession and perhaps the agent at whose hands we suffer persecution with Christ (2 Tim. iii. 11, 12). In a corrupt Church Luther and in a formal Church Wesley delivered their testimony and worked the work of reformation and revival. The severest judgment of the Church is not a call to come out, but to testify and suffer with Christ for the reviving of God's work within the Church.

The Church requires the membership and testimony of all Christians. What are the conditions of membership? Those only which the New Testament enjoins upon all Christians. We need not fear that more will be required. More cannot be required. Our baptism is a confession. The frequent communions are but acknowledgments that we live by him (John vi. 48-56).

The Church offers a fellowship in Christ's name and a vantage ground for testimony and for labor. It means much. It gives much. It claims our allegiance

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chiefly, however, because it is Christ's Church—his body, the organ of his life in the world.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the prevailing attitude of the New Testament scripture toward the Church?
2. Did Jesus organize the church? If not, how did it come into existence?
3. What attitudes toward the Church have been and are now maintained in the world?
4. Can you suggest any foundation principle as the result of which it has come to pass that the Church merits adverse criticism?
5. What two very different definitions of the church are given by churchmen of different types?
6. Why do Christians stand in need of the Church?
7. Name five of the great values of life that are conserved by the Church.
8. In what way is the church a challenge?
9. Why do new converts especially need the fellowship of the Church?
10. What does the church require of its members?

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